

## ‘Keys to the Sustainability of the Australian Ports Sector’

Organised by The School of Business IT and Logistics

### David Anderson.

The value of trade transiting through Australia’s ports equates to about one-third of our GDP. By any measure we are a highly trade exposed nation where the economic and social well-being of our population is very sensitive to our ability to successfully compete in volatile export commodity markets and to efficiently import consumables and inputs to production.

This is the story about value but there is a further narrative about very large volumes— not only is our trade task very substantial so are our trade volumes signifying, by global standards, a formidable and critical port task.

Notwithstanding these settings the formulation of policies and regulations to promote a competitive ports sector has, at least until fairly recent times, languished. Only relatively recently have governments overtly recognised our ports as major economic generators and integrated port planning developed freight strategies with ports at their centre.

The ports industry itself has also stepped up applying itself, including at the local and community level, to communicate the message about those ingredients essential to ensuring its long-term viability.

I will propose a simple definition of sustainability that goes beyond the often popularly held idea (including at political level) that it is somehow limited to environmental outcomes. It is about the totality of the planning and management of port infrastructure. However, it is necessarily also a flexible notion insofar as, depending on the nature and environment particular to any one port, those settings critical to successful long term operation will vary, in some respects, port to port.

Sustainability goes hand in hand with other concepts such as Corporate Responsibility and there is a growing trend for corporations to make reference to sustainability principles in their annual reporting as essential to broad community, political and indeed shareholder acceptance of their ongoing operation. The UN itself has developed sustainability principles which are increasingly being adopted by Australian companies. As a community Australia’s ports are still assessing their appetite to totally embrace this approach.

Sustainability can be labelled in a number of different ways. To my mind the fundamental and most pertinent question is “what needs to be done (including at both the port and public policy level) to make sure Australia’s ports are here and thriving in 50 to 100 years’ time.’

A number in our ports sector are now leading the way through integrating into their business planning a total menu of what could broadly be described as sustainability practices, and a number of excellent cases can be identified. This is viewed as the best pathway to gaining political and community support for their operations and development aspirations and, amongst other things, to staying ahead of the regulator.

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017  
**Time:** 11am – 12pm  
**Venue:** Swanston Academic Building  
Building 80, Level 5, Room 12

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS IT AND LOGISTICS  
Research Seminar Series



David Anderson served as Chief Executive Officer of Ports Australia from January 2007 until April 2017 reporting to a Board of 10 port company CEOs. Over that period, he succeeded in ramping up ports and port related issues on the public policy agenda and in securing improvements in the settings that influence the ability of Australia's ports to operate as effectively as possible and to plan increases in their capacity with certainty.

He has held senior management positions in a number of other national peak industry bodies including as Chief Executive of NatRoad, the Australia wide organisation representing the long-distance trucking industry.

David has also served in advisory positions and as Chief of Staff to a number of Federal Transport Ministers in the Hawke and Keating Governments.

David has been a Director of the Australian Logistics Council and Deputy Chairman of PIANC Australia, as well as a member of the AMSA Advisory Council, the Australian Maritime Defence Council and the National Transport Commission's Industry Advisory Group. He has also served as a member of the NSW and Queensland Freight Councils and was a key player in the establishment and operation of the Commonwealth Ports Forum and a number of other agency consultative forums.

He commenced his career as a graduate entrant in the Federal Treasury.

David holds degrees in Economics, and in Politics and Modern History, from the Australian National University. He is also a Graduate of the Australia Institute of Company Directors.